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CONFIDENTIAL

*Internal Lang Div - 3-3*  
*7/5/55*

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Deficiencies in Foreign Language Skills Among Agency Personnel

1. I am convinced that the deficiency in language skills among Agency personnel is a serious deterrent to the quality and effectiveness of our intelligence effort, not only overseas, but also here at headquarters.

2. On 28 June 1954 I transmitted to General Cabell a detailed analysis of this problem together with my recommendations for its resolution. His consideration of this study resulted in a request to me to prepare a program of action to equip the Agency with area-and-language trained personnel commensurate with its needs. On 18 August 1954 I complied with his request in the form of the composite staff study you will find attached at Tab A.

3. The recommendations in this staff study, at Tab A, are based upon the following listed critical elements in the problem:

a. Existing regulations governing area and language training,  copies of which are attached at Tab B, are inadequate since they apply solely to personnel scheduled for or working in overseas assignments, and are only partially observed. It should be noted that  which authorizes language training of Agency personnel overseas is permissive and not mandatory.

b. There have not yet been established specific requirements for language skills which are directly related to job qualification standards throughout the Agency. Thus it is not now possible to measure with any precision the language skill requirements of the Agency or to provide for the removal of deficiencies in an orderly and systematic manner.

c. While there is general agreement in principle throughout the Agency that language and area skills are desirable, and even necessary in some cases, there is also a notable lack of conviction that such skills are essential, compared to others, when the time required for training is measured against the kind of urgency that exists in placing personnel on duty assignments.

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4. OTR resources to deal with the language training problems of the Agency have steadily improved over the past years. The Qualifications Review Panels, established in 1955, have proved of great value in ensuring that only qualified individuals are selected for training. We have achieved high correlation between our language learning aptitude testing and results achieved by students in training. Our language proficiency testing program enables us to recommend appropriate utilization of our language skilled personnel throughout the Agency. We have increased the number of language courses offered within the Agency and have broadened our external arrangements.

5. Among the recommendations I made in the staff study, at Tab A, was that some kind of incentive award program, similar to that used in the British services, be developed for Agency personnel who acquired and maintained their language skills. General Cabell expressed interest in this idea and requested further study by the Director of Personnel, and comments on his findings by the DD/P and by me. These views support my own regarding the nature and causes of the problem. This material is attached at Tab C.

6. During FY 1955, OTR provided language training at Agency expense to [ ] employees. An additional [ ] enrolled in self-study programs in the OTR language laboratory. I have received estimated requirements for the training of [ ] employees in 46 different languages during FY 1956. Compared to FY 1954, this represents an increased language training effort of 65%.

7. While this increase is gratifying, and reflects an increased awareness within the Agency of the need to equip our people with language skills, we must take positive steps to ensure that the scale of our language training effort is in fact commensurate with the real requirements of the Agency. I have no basis, under present circumstances, which permits me to give you assurance on this point.

8. As a means of resolving this problem I strongly urge you to approve, in principle, the recommendations contained in the staff study at Tab A. Upon your approval in principle, I will prepare the action papers to put these recommendations into effect and coordinate them within DD/P, DD/I, and DD/S before submitting them to you for final approval.

(Signed)

MATTHEW BAIRD  
Director of Training

APPROVED

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Director of Central Intelligence

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